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# SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE





SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE  
BY ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING



M DCCCC II



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**SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE**

WORKS FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT

The following list of works is intended to be a general guide to the literature of the subject. It is not intended to be a complete list, but rather a selection of the most important and interesting works. The list is arranged in alphabetical order of the author's name.

1. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

2. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

3. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

4. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

5. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

6. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

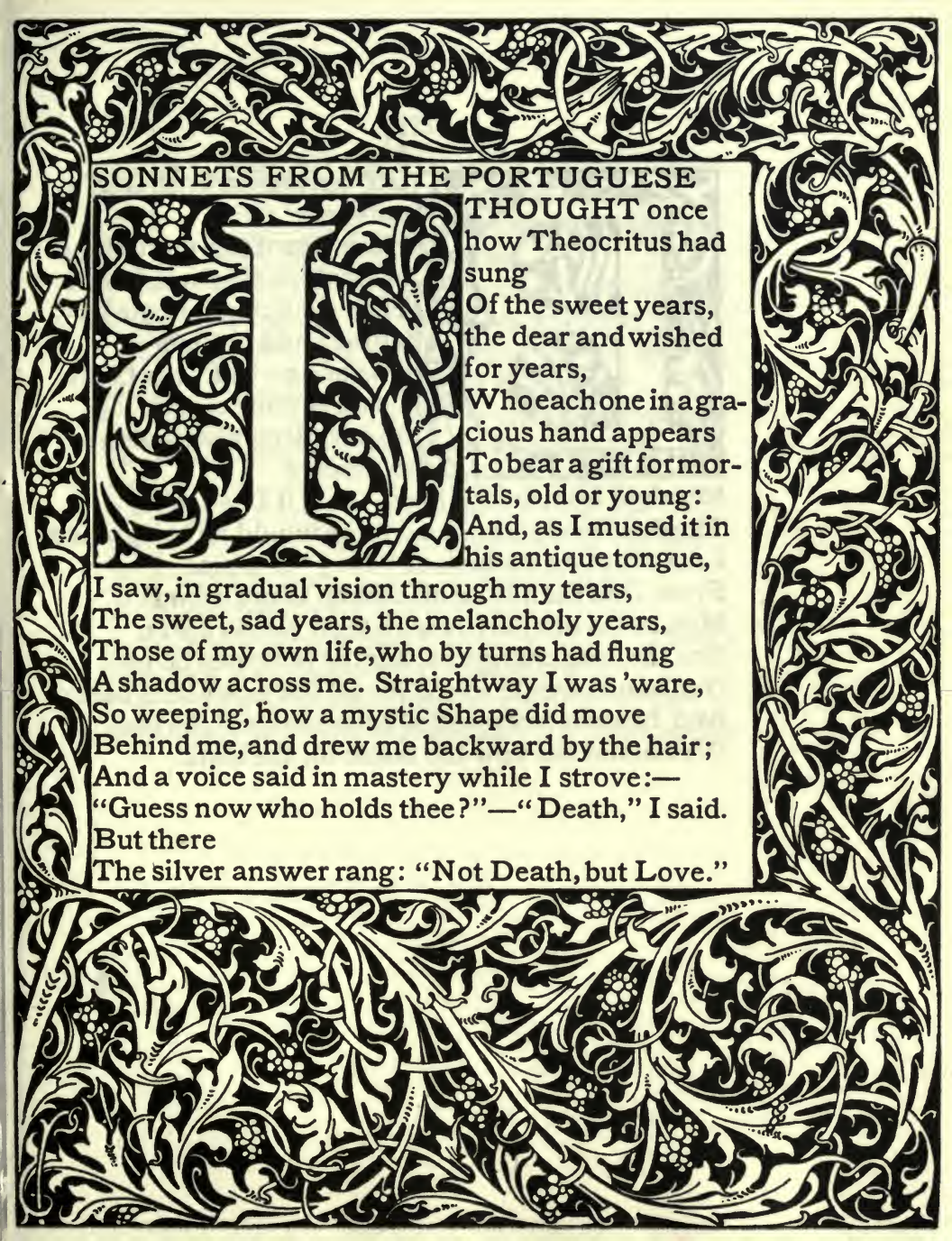
7. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

8. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

9. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].

10. *The Works of the Establishment*, by [Author Name], [Publisher], [Year].





SONNETS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

**L**

THOUGHT once  
how Theocritus had  
sung  
Of the sweet years,  
the dear and wished  
for years,  
Who each one in a gra-  
cious hand appears  
To bear a gift for mor-  
tals, old or young:  
And, as I mused it in  
his antique tongue,

I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,  
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,  
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung  
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,  
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move  
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair;  
And a voice said in mastery while I strove:—  
“Guess now who holds thee?” —“Death,” I said.  
But there  
The silver answer rang: “Not Death, but Love.”

II



**UT** only three in all God's  
 universe  
 Have heard this word thou  
 hast said,—Himself, beside  
 Thee speaking and me lis-  
 tening! and replied  
 One of us—that was God!  
 —and laid the curse  
 So darkly on my eyelids as  
 to amerce

My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,  
 The deathweights placed there would have signified  
 Less absolute exclusion. “Nay” is worse  
 From God than from all others, O my friend!  
 Men could not part us with their worldly jars,  
 Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend:  
 Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars:  
 And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,  
 We should but vow the faster for the stars.

### III



NLIKE are we, unlike,  
O princely Heart!  
Unlike our uses and our  
destinies.

Our ministering two an-  
gels look surprise  
On one another, as they  
strike athwart  
Their wings in passing.  
Thou, bethink thee, art

A guest for queens to social pageantries,  
With gazes from a hundred brighter eyes  
Than tears even can make mine, to ply thy part  
Of chief musician. What hast thou to do  
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,  
A poor, tired, wandering singer,—singing through  
The dark, and leaning up a cypress tree?  
The chism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—  
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV



**T**HOU hast thy calling to  
 some palace floor,  
 Most gracious singer of  
 high poems! where  
 The dancers will break  
 footing from the care  
 Of watching up thy preg-  
 nant lips for more,  
 And dost thou lift this  
 house's latch too poor  
 For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear  
 To let thy music drop here unaware  
 In folds of golden fulness at my door?  
 Look up and see the casement broken in,  
 The bats and owlets builders in the roof!  
 My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.  
 Hush! call no echo up in further proof  
 Of desolation! there's a voice within  
 That weeps as — thou must sing — alone, aloof.

## V



LIFT my heavy heart  
 up solemnly,  
 As once Electra her se-  
 pulchral urn,  
 And, looking in thine  
 eyes, I overturn  
 The ashes at thy feet.  
 Behold and see  
 What a great heap of  
 grief lay hid in me,

And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn  
 Through the ashen grayness. If thy foot in scorn  
 Could tread them out to darkness utterly,  
 It might be well perhaps. But if instead  
 Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow  
 The gray dust up—those laurels on thine head,  
 O my Beloved, will not shield thee so,  
 That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred  
 The hair beneath. Stand farther off then! Go.

## VI



O from me. Yet I feel  
 that I shall stand  
 Henceforth in thy sha-  
 dow. Nevermore  
 Alone upon the threshold  
 of my door  
 Of individual life, I shall  
 command  
 The uses of my soul, nor  
 lift my hand

Serenely in the sunshine as before.  
 Without the sense of that which I forbore —  
 Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land  
 Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine  
 With pulses that beat double. What I do  
 And what I dream include thee, as the wine  
 Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue  
 God for myself, He hears that name of thine,  
 And sees within my eyes the tears of two.

## VII



HE face of all the world  
 is changed, I think,  
 Since first I heard the  
 footsteps of thy soul  
 Move still, oh, still, beside  
 me as they stole  
 Betwixt me and the  
 dreadful outer brink  
 Of obvious death, where  
 I who thought to sink

Was caught up into love, and taught the whole  
 Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole  
 God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,  
 And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.  
 The name of country, heaven, are changed away  
 For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;  
 And this — this lute and song — loved yesterday,  
 (The singing angels know) are only dear,  
 Because thy name moves right in what they say.

## VIII



**W**HAT can I give thee  
back, O liberal  
And princely giver,—who  
hast brought the gold  
And purple of thine heart,  
unstained, untold,  
And laid them on the out-  
side of the wall  
For such as I to take or  
leave withal,  
In unexpected largesse? Am I cold,  
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold  
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?  
Not so ; not cold—but very poor instead !  
Ask God who knows! for frequent tears have run  
The colours from my life, and left so dead  
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done  
To give the same as pillow to thy head.  
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.



## IX



AN it be right to give  
 what I can give?  
 To let thee sit beneath  
 the fall of tears  
 As salt as mine, and hear  
 the sighing years  
 Re-sighing on my lips  
 renunciative  
 Through those infrequent  
 smiles which fail to live

For all thy adjurations? O my fears,  
 That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,  
 So to be lovers ; and I own and grieve  
 That givers of such gifts as mine are, must  
 Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas !  
 I will not soil thy purple with my dust,  
 Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,  
 Nor give thee any love—which were unjust.  
 Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

## X



ET love, mere love, is  
 beautiful indeed  
 And worthy of accepta-  
 tion. Fire is bright,  
 Let temple burn, or flax;  
 an equal light  
 Leaps in the flame from  
 cedar-plank or weed:  
 And love is fire. And  
 when I say at need

I love thee—mark—I love thee!—in thy sight  
 I stand transfigured, glorified aright,  
 With conscience of the new rays that proceed  
 Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low  
 In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures  
 Who love God, God accepts while loving so.  
 And what I feel, across the inferior features  
 Of what I am, doth flash itself, and show  
 How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI



AND therefore if to love  
 can be desert,  
 I am not all unworthy.  
 Cheeks as pale  
 As these you see, and trem-  
 bling knees that fail  
 To bear the burden of a  
 heavy heart,  
 This weary minstrel-life  
 that once was girt

To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail  
 To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale  
 A melancholy music,—why advert  
 To these things? O Beloved, it is plain  
 I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!  
 And yet, because I love thee, I obtain  
 From that same love this vindicating grace —  
 To live on still in love, and yet in vain,  
 To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

## XII



**I**NDEED this very love  
 which is my boast,  
 And which, when rising  
 up from breast to brow,  
 Doth crown me with a  
 ruby large enow  
 To draw men's eyes and  
 prove the inner cost—  
 This love even, all my  
 worth, to the uttermost,  
 I should not love withal, unless that thou  
 Hadst set me an example, shown me how,  
 When first thine earnest eyes with mine were  
 crossed,  
 And love called love. And thus I cannot speak  
 Of love even as a good thing of my own.  
 Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and  
 weak,  
 And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—  
 And that I love, (O soul, I must be meek!)  
 Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII



AND wilt thou have me  
fashion into speech  
The love I bear thee, find-  
ing words enough,  
And hold the torch out,  
while the winds are rough,  
Between our faces to cast  
light on each?—  
I drop it at thy feet. I can-  
not teach

My hand to hold my spirit so far off  
From myself—me—that I should bring thee  
proof

In words, of love hid in me out of reach.  
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood  
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—  
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,  
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,  
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,  
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV



**L**F thou must love me, let  
 it be for nought  
 Except for love's sake  
 only. Do not say,  
 "I love her for her smile—  
 her look—her way  
 Of speaking gently,—for  
 a trick of thought  
 That falls in well with  
 mine, and certes brought  
 A sense of pleasant ease on such a day,"—  
 For these things in themselves, Beloved, may  
 Be changed, or change for thee,—and love so  
 wrought  
 May be unwrought so. Neither love me for  
 Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:  
 A creature might forget to weep, who bore  
 Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby.  
 But love me for love's sake, that evermore  
 Thou mayst love on through love's eternity.

XV



ACCUSE me not, beseech  
 thee, that I wear  
 Too calm and sad a face  
 in front of thine;  
 For we two look two  
 ways, and cannot shine  
 With the same sunlight  
 on our brow and hair.  
 On me thou lookest with  
 no doubting care,

As on a bee shut in a crystalline;  
 For sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,  
 And to spread wing and fly in the outer air  
 Were most impossible failure, if I strove  
 To fail so. But I look on thee—on thee—  
 Beholding, besides love, the end of love,  
 Hearing oblivion beyond memory;  
 As one who sits and gazes from above,  
 Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI



AND yet, because thou  
overcomest so,  
Because thou art noble  
and like a king,  
Thou canst prevail against  
my fears and fling  
Thy purple round me, till  
my heart shall grow  
Too close against thine  
heart hencefoth to know

How it shook when alone. Why, conquering  
May prove as lordly and complete a thing  
In lifting upward as in crushing low!  
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword  
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,  
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,  
Here ends my strife. If thou invite me forth,  
I rise above abasement at the word.  
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.



XVII



Y poet, thou canst touch  
on all the notes  
God set between his  
After and Before,  
And strike up and strike  
off the general roar  
Of the rushing worlds a  
melody that floats  
In a serene air purely.  
Antidotes

Of medicated music, answering for  
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour  
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes  
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine!  
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?  
A hope, to sing by gladly? or a fine  
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?  
A shade in which to sing—of palm or pine?  
A grave on which to rest from singing? Choose.

## XVIII



NEVER gave a lock of  
hair away  
To a man, Dearest, ex-  
cept this to thee,  
Which now upon my fin-  
gers thoughtfully  
I ring out to the full  
brown length, and say:  
"Take it." My day of  
youth went yesterday;  
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,  
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,  
As girls do, any more: it only may  
Now shade on two pale cheeks, the mark of tears,  
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside  
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-  
shears  
Would take this first, but Love is justified:  
Take it thou,—finding pure, from all those years,  
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX



HE soul's Rialto hath its  
merchandise;  
I barter curl for curl  
upon that mart,  
And from my poet's fore-  
head to my heart  
Receive this lock which  
outweighs argosies,—  
As purply black, as erst  
to Pindar's eyes

The dim purpleal tresses gloomed athwart  
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counter-  
part,

The bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I surmise,  
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black !  
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,  
I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,  
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,  
Here on my heart as on thy brow, to lack  
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

## XX



ELOVED, my Beloved,  
 when I think  
 That thou wast in the  
 world a year ago,  
 What time I sate alone  
 here in the snow  
 And saw no footprint,  
 heard the silence sink  
 No moment at thy voice,  
 but link by link

Went counting all my chains as if that so  
 They never could fall off at any blow  
 Struck by thy possible hand,—why, thus I drink  
 Of life's great cup of wonder. Wonderful,  
 Never to feel thee thrill the day or night  
 With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull  
 Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white  
 Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,  
 Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

## XXI



AY over again and yet  
 once over again  
 That thou dost love me.  
 Though the word repeated  
 Should seem "a cuckoo-  
 song," as thou dost treat it,  
 Remember, never to the  
 hill or plain,  
 Valley and wood, without  
 her cuckoo-strain

Comes the fresh Spring in all her green completed!  
 Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted  
 By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain  
 Cry, "Speak once more, thou lovest!" Who can  
 fear

Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll,  
 Too many flowers, though each shall crown the  
 year?

Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll  
 The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,  
 To love me also in silence with thy soul.

XXII



WHEN our two souls  
stand up erect and strong,  
Face to face, silent, draw-  
ing nigh and nigher,  
Until the lengthening  
wings break into fire  
At either curved point,—  
what bitter wrong  
Can the earth do to us,  
that we should not long  
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,  
The angels would press on us, and aspire  
To drop some golden orb of perfect song  
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay  
Rather on earth, Beloved,—where the unfit  
Contrarious moods of men recoil away  
And isolate pure spirits, and permit  
A place to stand and love in for a day,  
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

## XXIII



S it indeed so? If I lay  
 here dead  
 Wouldst thou miss any  
 life in losing mine?  
 And would the sun for  
 thee more coldly shine,  
 Because of grave-damps  
 falling round my head?  
 I marvelled, my Beloved,  
 when I read

Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—  
 But—so much to thee? Can I pour thy wine  
 While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead  
 Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.  
 Then, love me, Love! look on me—breathe on me!  
 As brighter ladies do not count it strange,  
 For love, to give up acres and degree,  
 I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange  
 My near sweet view of Heaven for earth with  
 thee!

## XXIV



LET the world's sharp-  
ness like a clasp-  
ing knife  
Shut in upon itself and  
do no harm  
In this close hand of Love,  
now soft and warm ;  
And let us hear no sound  
of human strife  
After the click of the  
shutting. Life to life—

I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,  
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm  
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife  
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still  
The lilies of our lives may reassure  
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible  
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer ;  
Growing straight, out of man's reach, on the hill.  
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.



## XXV



HEAVY heart, Beloved,  
 have I borne  
 From year to year until I  
 saw thy face,  
 And sorrow after sorrow  
 took the place  
 Of all those natural joys  
 as lightly worn  
 As the stringed pearls,  
 each lifted in its turn

By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace  
 Were changed to long despairs, till God's own  
 grace

Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn  
 My heavy heart. Then thou didst bid me bring  
 And let it drop adown thy calmly great  
 Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing  
 Which its own nature doth precipitate,  
 While thine doth close above it, mediating  
 Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI



LIVED with visions for  
my company  
Instead of men and  
women, years ago,  
And found them gentle  
mates, nor thought to know  
A sweeter music than  
they played to me.  
But soon their trailing  
purple was not free  
Of this world's dust, their lutes did silent grow,  
And I myself grew faint and blind below  
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come—  
to be,  
Beloved, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,  
Their songs, their splendours—better, yet the same,  
As river-water hallowed into fountains—  
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame  
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—  
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to  
shame.

XXVII



Y own Beloved, who  
 hast lifted me  
 From this drear flat of  
 earth where I was thrown,  
 And in betwixt the lan-  
 guid ringlets blown  
 A life-breath, till the  
 forehead hopefully  
 Shines out again, as all  
 the angels see,

Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,  
 Who camest to me when the world was gone,  
 And I who looked for only God found thee!  
 I find thee : I am safe, and strong, and glad.  
 As one who stands in dewless asphodel  
 Looks backward on the tedious time he had  
 In the upper life,—so I, with bosom-swell,  
 Make witness here, between the good and bad,  
 That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII



Y letters! all dead paper,—  
 mute and white!  
 And yet they seem alive  
 and quivering  
 Against my tremulous  
 hands which loose the string  
 And let them drop down  
 on my knee to-night.  
 This said, he wished to  
 have me in his sight

Once, as a friend; this fixed a day in spring  
 To come and touch my hand—a simple thing,  
 Yet I wept for it!—this—the paper's light—  
 Said, Dear, I love thee; and I sank and quailed  
 As if God's future thundered on my past.  
 This said, I am thine—and so its ink has paled  
 With lying at my heart that beat too fast;  
 And this—O Love, thy words have ill availed,  
 If what this said I dared repeat at last!

## XXIX



THINK of thee!—my  
 thoughts do twine and bud  
 About thee, as wild vines  
 about a tree  
 Put out broad leaves, and  
 soon there's nought to see  
 Except the straggling green  
 which hides the wood.  
 Yet, O my palm-tree, be  
 it understood

I will not have my thoughts instead of thee  
 Who art dearer, better! Rather instantly  
 Renew thy presence; as a strong tree should,  
 Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,  
 And let these bands of greenery which insphere  
 thee

Drop heavily down,—burst, shattered, every-  
 where!

Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee  
 And breathe within thy shadow a new air,  
 I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX



SEE thy image through  
 my tears to-night,  
 And yet to-day I saw  
 thee smiling. How  
 Refer the cause?—Be-  
 loved, is it thou  
 Or I? Who makes me  
 sad? The acolyte  
 Amid the chanted joy  
 and thankful rite

May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,  
 On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow  
 Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,  
 As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's amen.  
 Beloved, dost thou love? or did I see all  
 The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when  
 Too vehement light dilated my ideal  
 For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again  
 As now these tears come—falling hot and real?

## XXXI



**T**HOU comest! all is said  
without a word.

I sit beneath thy looks, as  
children do

In the noon-sun, with souls  
that tremble through

Their happy eyelids from  
an unaverred

Yet prodigal inward joy.  
Behold, I erred

In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue

The sin most, but the occasion—that we two

Should for a moment stand unministered

By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,

Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would  
rise,

With thy broad heart serenely interpose :

Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies

These thoughts which tremble when bereft of  
those,

Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

## XXXII



HE first time that the sun  
 rose on thine oath  
 To love me, I looked for-  
 ward to the moon  
 To slacken all those bonds  
 which seemed too soon  
 And quickly tied to make  
 a lasting troth.  
 Quick-loving hearts, I  
 thought, may quickly loathe;  
 And, looking on myself, I seemed not one  
 For such man's love!—more like an out-of-tune  
 Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth  
 To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste,  
 Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.  
 I did not wrong myself so, but I placed  
 A wrong on thee. For perfect strains may float  
 'Neath master-hands from instruments de-  
 faced,—  
 And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.



## XXXIII



ES, call me by my pet  
 name! let me hear  
 The name I used to run  
 at, when a child,  
 From innocent play, and  
 leave the cowslips piled,  
 To glance up in some  
 face that proved me dear  
 With the look of its eyes.  
 I miss the clear

Fond voices, which, being drawn and reconciled  
 Into the music of heaven's undefiled,  
 Call me no longer. Silence on the bier  
 While I call God—call God!—So let thy mouth  
 Be heir to those who are now exanimate ;  
 Gather the north flowers to complete the south,  
 And catch the early love up in the late !  
 Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,  
 With the same heart, will answer, and not wait.

## XXXIV



WITH the same heart, I  
 said, I 'll answer thee  
 As those, when thou shalt  
 call me by my name—  
 Lo, the vain promise! Is  
 the same the same,  
 Perplexed and ruffled by  
 life's strategy?  
 When called before, I  
 told how hastily

I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,  
 To run and answer with the smile that came  
 At play last moment, and went on with me  
 Through my obedience. When I answer now,  
 I drop a grave thought,—break from solitude;—  
 Yet still my heart goes to thee—ponder how—  
 Not as to a single good but all my good!  
 Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow  
 That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

## XXXV



F I leave all for thee, wilt  
 thou exchange  
 And be all to me? Shall I  
 never miss  
 Home-talk and blessing  
 and the common kiss  
 That comes to each in  
 turn, nor count it strange,  
 When I look up, to drop  
 on a new range

Of walls and floors,—another home than this?  
 Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is  
 Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?  
 That's hardest! If to conquer love has tried,  
 To conquer grief tries more,—as all things prove;  
 For grief indeed is love and grief beside.  
 Alas, I have grieved so I am hard to love—  
 Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,  
 And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove.

## XXXVI



WHEN we met first and  
 loved, I did not build  
 Upon the event with  
 marble. Could it mean  
 To last, a love set pendu-  
 lous between  
 Sorrow and sorrow?  
 Nay, I rather thrilled,  
 Distrusting every light  
 that seemed to gild

The onward path, and feared to overlean  
 A finger even. And though I have grown serene  
 And strong since then, I think that God has willed  
 A still renewable fear—O love, O troth—  
 Lest these enclasped hands should never hold,  
 This mutual kiss drop down between us both  
 As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold,  
 And Love be false! if he, to keep one oath,  
 Must lose one joy by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII



ARDON, oh, pardon,  
that my soul should make  
Of all that strong divineness  
which I know  
For thine and thee, an  
image only so  
Formed of the sand, and  
fit to shift and break.  
It is that distant years  
which did not take

Thy sovranly, recoiling with a blow,  
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo  
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake  
Thy purity of likeness and distort  
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit:  
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,  
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,  
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort  
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII



**F**IRST time he kissed me,  
 he but only kissed  
 The fingers of this hand  
 wherewith I write,  
 And ever since it grew  
 more clean and white,—  
 Slow to world greetings,  
 quick with its “Oh, list,”  
 When the angels speak.  
 A ring of amethyst  
 I could not wear here plainer to my sight  
 Than that first kiss. The second passed in height  
 The first, and sought the forehead, and half  
 missed,  
 Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!  
 That was the chrism of love which love’s own  
 crown,  
 With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.  
 The third upon my lips was folded down  
 In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,  
 I have been proud and said: “My Love, my own.”

## XXXIX



BECAUSE thou hast the  
 power and own'st the grace  
 To look through and be-  
 hind this mask of me  
 (Against which years have  
 beat thus blanchingly  
 With their rains), and be-  
 hold my soul's true face,  
 The dim and dreary wit-  
 ness of life's race,—

Because thou hast the faith and love to see,  
 Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,  
 The patient angel waiting for his place  
 In the new Heavens,—because nor sin nor woe,  
 Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,  
 Nor all which others viewing, turn to go,  
 Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed,—  
 Nothing repels thee,—Dearest, teach me so  
 To pour out gratitude, as thou dost, good!



H, yes! they love through  
 all this world of ours!  
 I will not gainsay love,  
 called love forsooth.  
 I have heard love talked  
 in my early youth,  
 And since, not so long  
 back but that the flowers  
 Then gathered, smell still.  
 Mussulmans and Giaours  
 Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth  
 For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth  
 Slips on the nut, if after frequent showers  
 The shell is over-smooth; and not so much  
 Will turn the thing called love aside to hate,  
 Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such  
 A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait  
 Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to  
 touch  
 And think it soon when others cry "Too late."



XLI



THANK all who have  
 loved me in their hearts,  
 With thanks and love from  
 mine. Deep thanks to all  
 Who paused a little near  
 the prison-wall  
 To hear my music in its  
 louder parts,  
 Ere they went onward,  
 each one to the mart's

Or temple's occupation, beyond call.  
 But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall  
 When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's  
 Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot,  
 To hearken what I said between my tears,—  
 Instruct me how to thank thee! Oh, to shoot  
 My soul's full meaning into future years,  
 That they should lend it utterance, and salute  
 Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

XLII



Y future will not copy fair  
my past —

I wrote that once; and  
thinking at my side  
My ministering life-  
angel justified  
The word by his appeal-  
ing look upcast  
To the white throne of  
God, I turned at last,

And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied  
To angels in thy soul! Then I, long tried  
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,  
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff  
Gave out green leaves with morning dew's im-  
pearled

I seek no copy now of life's first half:  
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,  
And write me new my future's epigraph,  
New angel mine, unhop'd for in the world!

XLIII



OW do I love thee? Let  
me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth  
and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when  
feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being  
and Ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of  
every day's

Most quiet need, by sun and candle-light.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right ;  
I love thee purely, as men turn from Praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears of all my life!—and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV



ELOVED, thou hast  
brought me many flowers  
Plucked in the garden,  
all the summer through  
And winter, and it  
seemed as if they grew  
In this close room, nor  
missed the sun and showers.  
So, in the like name of  
that love of ours,

Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,  
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew  
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and  
bowers

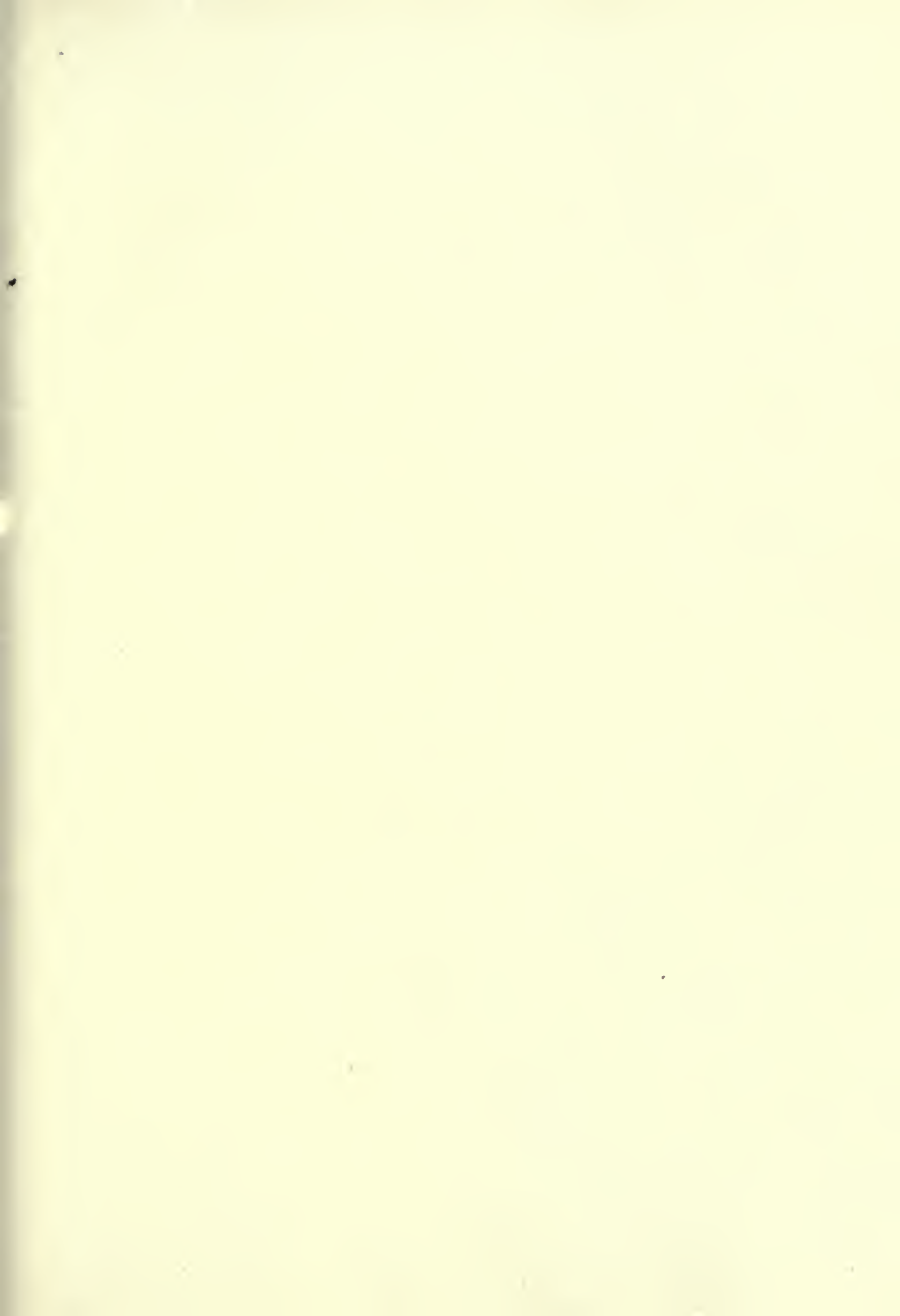
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,  
And wait thy weeding; yet here's eglantine,  
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do  
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not  
pine.

Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,  
And tell thy soul their roots are left in mine.

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